

# KENT BLACK HISTORY MONTH ONLINE CELEBRATIONS 2020

## Evaluation Report

### Overview

Kent Equality Cohesion Council and Cohesion Plus working in partnership with the North Kent Caribbean Network delivered 3 online Black History Month celebrations across Kent covering the districts of Maidstone, Ashford, Folkestone, Margate, Gravesham and Dartford.

The first of the events took place across Maidstone and Ashford on 7th October and was delivered in partnership with Ashford BME Association, Black Heritage and local rapper and community activist Fennie. The second event took place on the following week on 14th October across Folkestone and Margate in partnership with Black History Month Folkestone, local artists Randolph Matthews, Lee Desai and Rev Anita McKenzie. The third and final event took place across Gravesham and Dartford on the 21st October and was delivered in partnership with the North Kent Caribbean Network.

During the course of the events, three individual RoundTable discussions were recorded and aired which covered topics such as the impact of Covid-19 on local communities, the significance of Black Lives Matters in Kent and the many achievements of the diverse communities across the county. Special messages in support of the celebrations were given across the three events by key partners including the Chief Constable of Kent Police Alan Pughsley and Leader of Kent County Council Cllr Roger Gough amongst others.

The celebrations also saw keynote speakers such as Nathan Holder, a London based musician who spoke about the need to decolonise musical education as well as Elliot Reid, a local business owner who also has an interest in African History and Rev Anita McKenzie who gave a keynote presentation on the need to celebrate Black History Month now more so than ever.

We commissioned local music collective G-Town to create a spoken word performance which was shown at each event. The piece spoke about the impact that Black Lives Matter had on the young people involved. We also produced an online performance working with the Folkin Fusion Collective which fused the djembe and dhol drums and was shared online during the Gravesham and Dartford event and across our online platforms.

In addition to the online celebrations and with Remembrance Day taking place not long after Black History Month, we produced a short film to commemorate the vast contribution made by the Commonwealth to both World War efforts which we released at the end of the month.



While the ongoing pandemic has drastically altered the way in which large scale celebrations are conducted, we believe that it was imperative that Black History Month be celebrated in 2020, a year that has shed light on the disproportionate way in which BAME communities were impacted by the pandemic. 2020 also saw the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement which has catapulted into a global issue with events and peaceful protests taking place around Kent in solidarity. Within this context we felt that arranging events for Black History Month was more important than ever and an opportunity to celebrate our shared values in Kent which bind us together. It was also an opportunity to acknowledge that Black History is British History.

## Community Engagement and Stats

With the on-going impact of the pandemic, we worked hard to share content on our website and social media platforms throughout the month of October. On our social media alone we have had over 76,600 views to date with over half of them coming from You Tube. These campaigns were geographically targeted across Kent. In addition to the social media interaction, around 300 guests attended live online, not including the schools that streamed the events to multiple classes.

Post event, a survey was shared with all event attendees. We had a 25% response rate and the results were as follows:

- 98% of those responded rated the events they attended either 'Excellent' or 'Good'
- 90% rated the content of the event they attended either 'Excellent' or 'Good'
- 95% rated the overall quality of the events either 'Excellent' or 'Good'
- 100% said they were 'Very Likely' or 'Likely' to recommend our events

Some feedback captured is below.

"The insight that was provided from each of the key speakers really thought provoking and compelling."

"I loved the music, the speakers, the history and the change that is about to come. It was wonderfully put together and the ending was just so touching."

"I like the fact that information was given to the public about all those important Black people who played such a big part in the history of the UK. I also appreciated the points made about negative behaviours portrayed towards Black people. Well done and thank you. I hope that this event makes people think about how they behave towards each other."

"Love the all-round effort put in and that you had community engagement"

"The talk by the historian was wonderful. He was concise but enthusiastic about his subject and as a white woman felt he was unbiased"

"Excellent use of technology, good mix of speakers to ensure the event remained engaging. Also good use of video clips to assist with this also"

"The personal statements and presentations were just amazing"

"It felt like a well-balanced programme of factual and artistic content with a lot of information and learning nicely intertwined"

"The event was divided into sessions of varying lengths which was good because they kept you interested and the speakers all spoke with enthusiasm and knowledge"

"I loved the format and the presentations were so good - the best Black History event that I have attended"

"In terms of learning I was reassured that I and my organisation had insight to many of the issues covered - but recognise that we still have more to do. So in terms of learning I was provided with greater context to a number of areas I was already sighted on - but this was invaluable context."

"Good to find ways of communicating and celebrating events even through the Pandemic"

"We will reevaluate how we and our staff view BHM and learning with regards to historic events. This will be reviewed in line with our regular training inputs and engagement sessions."

"I thought the messages were so powerful from today and made me really emotional at times - the struggle is real and on-going!"

"History i had never heard of before but was extremely relevant and its outrageous it hasn't been taught"

"I found it really powerful to know that there is a community of people that are committed to driving change"

"Excellent format and really varied content - arts, history, mix of styles. Very well put together. thank you!"

"The variety of content was excellent."

"Totally Brilliant! I learnt so much, introduced to young talents such as Fennie. And as always the contributions from @.Randolph, Rachael, Lee and Kevin.... was awesome! Also, the speech by Councillor Roger & the Kent police chief constable was very good and give us much hope."

"It was a very relaxed atmosphere with people talking easily and openly which was great ... the most important part for me is hearing the participants speaking about what BLM means to them and the impact it has had on them. That's much more important to me than if someone might have pressed mute by accident. I thought it was a great event, well put together with some great content. Sound quality was excellent. Well done to the organisers and the guest speakers. You did yourselves proud"

## Next Steps

We are incredibly proud of what we have been able to achieve during a time that does not permit people to meet and have challenging and informative discourse in person. The strength of our work has always lain in bringing people together from all walks of life regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or faith. With these core beliefs in mind, we felt it important that Black History Month celebrations took place especially during a year which has shown the unfortunate truths of ongoing systematic inequalities. As such, the celebrating of achievements, the undertaking of challenging conversations and the highlighting of a shared British history was imperative. Now more than ever, history needs to be truly reflective and representative in order to step forward into real, systemic change.

We are already in discussions with other community groups around Kent so that we continue to use Black History Month as a means of bringing communities together and celebrate the diverse British history, highlighting both the triumphs and challenges.



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